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THE FORM OF THE CHLAMYS

BY F. B. TARBELL

The question of the form of the chlamys is one of the most perplexing that meet us in the study of Greek costume. Every one of the numerous modern statements on the subject with which I am acquainted is either indistinct or, in my judgment, erroneous. And yet the evidence is abundant, consisting not only of numerous representations of the garment in vase-painting and sculpture, but also of several more or less specific indications in our literary sources.¹ Under these circumstances it would seem as if a convincing solution must be attainable.

We are in the habit of applying the name "chlamys" with a great deal of confidence to all small brooch-fastened outer garments represented in Greek art. But for our present purpose it is better to take nothing for granted. For identifying, then, the chlamys in art we have chiefly the following data: it was fastened by a fibula (*Isidore Orig.* 19. 24. 2: *chlamys est, quae ex una parte induitur, neque consutur, sed fibula infrenatur*; *Ovid Met.* 14. 393, 394; *Suetonius Tib.* 6); it was associated with the petasus (*Philemon*, quoted by *Pollux* 10. 164; *Anthol. Gr.* xii. 78); it was worn by Hermes (*Ovid Met.* 2. 733; *Lucian Tim.* 30; *Pausanias* v. 27. 8). Accordingly, the chlamys may be recognized in such vase-paintings as Figs. 8, 463, 524 of Baumeister's *Denkmäler; Arch. Zeitung*, 1854, Pl. 67; *Jahrbuch d. arch. Instituts*, 1891, Pl. I, and *Anzeiger*, p. 23. From these and similarly well-attested examples we may go on to identify the chlamys, with more or less of certainty, in numerous other cases; but the question whether every small brooch-fastened garment may safely be called a chlamys is one which I should like to leave open till the end.

The vase-paintings just cited have been chosen because they clearly show that, if the chlamys had one definite shape, it was

¹ Acknowledgment for reference to these sources is due to Blümner *Grächische Privatalterthümer*, p. 178, and to Amelung in Pauly-Wissowa *Real-Encyclopädie*, s. v. "Chlamys."

four-cornered. Numerous other representations, both in sculpture and vase-painting, confirm this statement. Others, while not clearly betraying the existence of four corners, afford no evidence to the contrary. So far as I can see, there are no cases of probable chlamydes which refuse to be interpreted as four-cornered. If, then, we could rely upon the accuracy of Greek renderings of costume in art, it would be our next duty to determine, by actual experiment, what particular four-cornered form the chlamys assumed. But, considering the liberties which the Greek artists took with the form and disposition of drapery, it is advisable to look to our literary authorities for further guidance. I shall attempt to show that, in connection with the monumental evidence, these authorities indicate this shape:

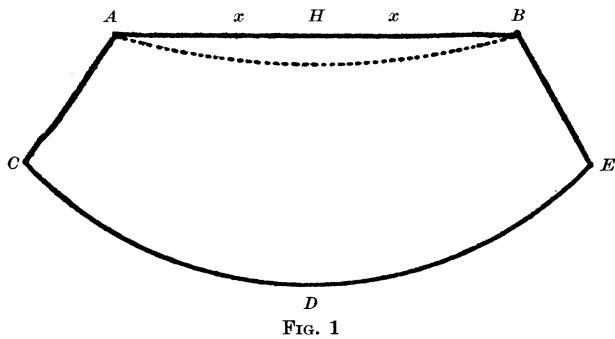


FIG. 1

or this:

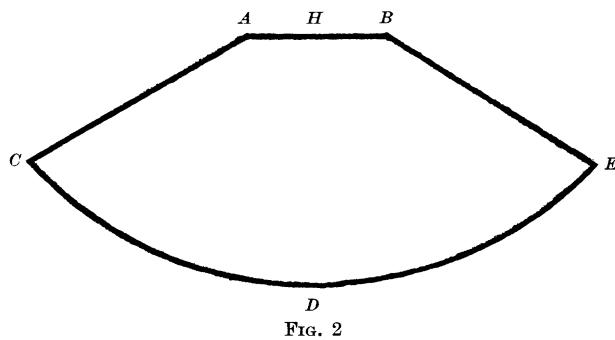


FIG. 2

A chlamys of the pattern shown in Fig. 1 would be fastened about the neck at the points marked *x*, and would display four corners; one of the pattern shown in Fig. 2 would be fastened at

A and *B*, and would display two corners. There would naturally be other variations, both in size and in proportions, but these do not call for special comment.

For the circular form of the lower edge the evidence is abundant. Thus Ammonius *De differentia vocabulorum* 147 quotes Didymus to this effect: *ἡ μὲν γὰρ χλαῖνα τετράγωνον ἴματιον· ἡ δὲ χλαμὸς εἰς τέλειον περὶ τὰ κάτω συνήκται*. The words *εἰς τέλειον συνήκται* defy interpretation, but the contrast with *τετράγωνον* shows that a curvilinear form is intended. Valckenaer in a note on the above passage cites the parallel language of Ptolemy of Ascalon, 90: *ἡ δὲ χλαμὸς . . . ἔχει κυκλοτερῆ τὰ κάτω*, and from the lexicon of Cyril: *χλαμὸς τὸ περιφερές, τὸ ἐν τῇ συνηθείᾳ λεγόμενον κυκλομάντιον*.

Still more instructive is the stock comparison, variously expressed by various writers, of the site of Alexandria to a chlamys. It will be convenient to begin with Plutarch's version (*Life of Alexander* 26): *κυκλοτερῆ κόλπον ἥγον, οὐ τὴν ἐντὸς περιφέρειαν εὐθεῖαι βάσεις ὥσπερ ἀπὸ κρασπέδων εἰς σχῆμα χλαμύδος ὑπελάμβανον ἐξ ἵσου συνάγονται τὸ μέγεθος*.¹ Here we meet again the circular lower edge (*τὴν ἐντὸς περιφέρειαν*), and learn further that the two adjacent edges were straight (*εὐθεῖαι βάσεις*) and inclined symmetrically so that the top was narrower than the bottom (*ἐξ ἵσου συνάγονται τὸ μέγεθος*), as in the diagrams given above. Pliny *N. H.* v. 62, puts the same comparison thus: *eam [i. e., Alexandriam] . . . ad effigiem Macedonicae chlamydis orbe gyrato laciniosam, dextra laevaque anguloso procursu*. Here the words *orbe gyrato laciniosam* must refer to the circular contour of the chlamys below, while the two *angulosi procursus* (called *αἱ ἐκατέρωθεν γωνίαι*² in Hesychius, Photius, and Suidas, *s. v. Θετταλικὰ πτερά*) are the ends conceived as extending to right and left of the breadth given by the upper edge, *AB*. Strabo's

The passage is difficult. Taking it in connection with other evidence bearing upon the form of the chlamys, I understand it somewhat as follows: "They described a rounded area, to whose inner arc straight lines succeeded, starting from what might be called the skirts of the area and narrowing the breadth uniformly, so as to produce the figure of a chlamys." The word *κόλπος*, which I have loosely translated by "area," may have been suggested by its use for that portion of a chiton which falls over the girdle. I understand *τὴν ἐντὸς περιφέρειαν* as the circular contour on the landward side. Strictly speaking, the words ought to imply a circular contour on the outer or seaward side, but I doubt whether this was intended by Plutarch; see below, p. 287.

¹ This point is borrowed from Wachsmuth *Rhein. Mus.* XXXV (1880), p. 454.

way of putting the same facts (C. 793) deserves also to be quoted, though it conveys no new information: *ἔστι δὲ χλαμυδοειδὲς τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ ἐδάφους τῆς πόλεως, οὐ τὰ μὲν ἐπὶ μῆκος πλευρά ἔστι τὰ ἀμφίκλυνστα ὅσον τριάκοντα σταδίων ἔχοντα διάμετρον, τὰ δὲ ἐπὶ πλάτος οἱ ἴσθμοὶ, ἐπτὰ ἡ ὀκτὼ σταδίων ἐκάτερος.* In this description *τὰ ἐπὶ μῆκος πλευρά* are the long sides, *AB* and *CDE*, called *τὰ ἀμφίκλυνστα* because washed, the former by the Mediterranean, the latter by Lake Mareotis. The curvature of *CDE* accounts for the fact that these sides are spoken of as having a “diameter,” by which I understand a straight line drawn from *C* to *E*. *τὰ ἐπὶ πλάτος (πλευρά)* are the short sides, *AC* and *BE*, called *οἱ ἴσθμοὶ* as being the narrowest places between two bodies of water. Diodorus xvii. 52 does not go into particulars, simply saying: *τὸν δὲ τύπον ἀποτελοῦσα χλαμύδι παραπλήσιον.*

There remains to be considered Strabo's repeated comparison of the inhabited portion of the earth to a chlamys. The most important passage for the present purpose is in C. 118, 119. According to this, the *οἰκουμένη* may be conceived as a chlamys inscribed in a parallelogram. The greatest length of the chlamys is indicated in terms which correspond to a straight line connecting *C* and *E* in our diagrams; its greatest breadth, to a straight line connecting *H* and *D*. The ends taper (*μνουρίζειν*; cf. C. 113: *συναγούσης εἰς μύουρον σχῆμα*; C. 116: *πολλὴ γὰρ συναγωγὴ τοῦ πλάτους πρὸς τοῖς ἄκροις*). This language, taken by itself, might suggest this form:

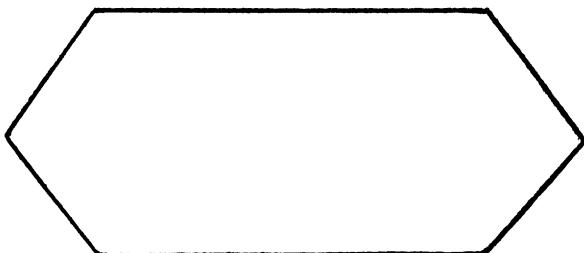


FIG. 3

This interpretation, however, is negatived by other evidence, and Strabo's words are easily reconcilable with the diagrams pro-

posed above. Furthermore, as the parallel of latitude which, according to Strabo, marks the greatest length of the *οἰκουμένη* is about midway between the northern and southern limits, I have drawn the diagrams accordingly. But for this proportion, no more than for any other proportion of the figure, would I claim that it was always exactly observed.

For the form of the upper edge, *AB*, there is no explicit evidence in our literary sources; but the fact that Ammonius and Ptolemy describe the *lower* edge as circular may be taken to imply that the upper edge was straight. It certainly could not have been an arc of the same radius as *CDE*, or of shorter radius, if Strabo's statement that the greatest breadth of the *οἰκουμένη* is at the middle, *HD*, is to be applied to the chlamys. If, however, Plutarch's phrase *τὴν ἐντὸς περιφέρειαν* be thought to imply a curve at the top as well as at the bottom, we may conceive the upper edge as forming a more shallow curve than the lower edge, as is suggested by the dotted line of Fig. 1.

In conclusion, some possible objections to the foregoing views must be considered:

1. It has been assumed that, while the chlamys varied in size and proportions, it was cut on an essentially uniform pattern. Some may be inclined to assume, on the contrary, that there were distinct types of chlamys native to different regions, as a Macedonian chlamys, a Thessalian chlamys, and possibly others. This view is clearly contradicted by our literary authorities. Strabo, Diodorus, and Plutarch, in the passages cited above, speak of the chlamys as if it had a fairly definite and well-known shape. Pliny's account of the site of Alexandria must be derived from the same source as the other similar accounts; and, if he speaks of a Macedonian chlamys, this can mean only that he regards the chlamys as of Macedonian origin. Similarly with the statement about the Thessalian chlamys in Hesychius, Photius, and Suidas, *s. v. Θετταλικὰ πτερά*, and in Pollux vii. 46. That the Thessalian chlamys was not a special type of chlamys is evident from Pollux's assertion of the equivalence between *ἐντεθετταλίσμεθα* and *χλαμυδοφοροῦμεν*. These lexical notes go back to some authority who regarded the chlamys as of Thessalian origin.

2. It might be imagined that some essential change in the form of the chlamys took place between the fifth century B. C., to which most of our monumental evidence belongs, and the time of Strabo. This notion is possible enough *a priori*, but it receives no support from the evidence. The fact that the best-attested representations can be easily interpreted in accordance with the literary evidence, provided reasonable allowance be made for the absence of photographic accuracy in the rendering of drapery by Greek artists, is sufficient ground for believing that no essential change took place.

3. It may be objected that neither the inhabited world as known to Strabo nor the site of Alexandria had the form advocated for the chlamys in the foregoing discussion. This seems to be true. But it is not the facts, but certain writers' conceptions of the facts, that are relevant. In the absence of scientific surveys, topography was to a considerable extent a matter of fancy. The fancies with which we are now concerned are, I think, sufficiently clear.

4. The last objection which occurs to me is of a different sort. No representation of a chlamys, so far as I am aware, gives any suggestion of a seam, as if the garment were sewed together out of two or more pieces. This, to be sure, is not decisive, inasmuch as a seam is very rarely indicated in Greek art, even where it must have existed.¹ Nevertheless, although positive evidence is lacking, I am disposed to assume that the chlamys was of one piece. Now the ordinary web of cloth is of uniform breadth, and a chlamys of the shape advocated above, if cut out of such a web, could not have selvages at both ends, *AC* and *BE*, nor would it be likely to have a selvage even at one end, as that would involve unnecessary waste of cloth in cutting. But in the best example of the Orpheus relief, the one in Naples, the outer garment of Hermes, presumptively a chlamys, has the edge corresponding to *BE* of Fig. 2 characterized as a selvage. The Parthenon Frieze

¹ For an indication of a seam in vase-painting see the interior of a cylix decorated by Aeson (*Antike Denkmäler* II, Pl. 1). As for the statue published in the *Bullettino della commissione archeologica comunale di Roma* XXV (1897), Pl. XII B and p. 175, and in the Brunn-Brückmann *Denkmäler*, no. 357, where Helbig (*Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom*, 2^{te} Auflage, no. 934) sees the indication of a seam, I am inclined to think that, while the meeting edges of the Doric chiton are marked as selvages, the seam itself is not expressed.

affords still more troublesome cases. The youthful figure on the west side, numbered 12 by Michaelis, wears a supposed chlamys, each end of which shows the puckered selvage; and the same is probably true of No. 15 in the same series. These selvages, then, of which perhaps other instances might be found, constitute the difficulty with which this paragraph deals. As has been partly indicated already, there is no lack of ways of escape. For one thing, I am assured by one who ought to know that there is no impossibility in weaving on a hand-loom a web with its edges inclined inward, like *AC* and *BE* of the diagrams. Perhaps this was done, and, if so, there is nothing more to be said. If, however, we assume the ordinary rectangular web, there is always the possibility that the chlamys was sewed together out of two or more pieces, in which case the difficulty again disappears. And if we do not wish to avail ourselves of this possibility, we may suppose, in the case of the Orpheus relief, either that the sculptor indicated the selvage arbitrarily and incorrectly or that he had in mind cases where the chlamys actually was cut with one end a selvage. In the case of the Parthenon sculptures, on the other hand, the selvages appear to be truthfully rendered,¹ and we are thus led to a query as to whether the two brooch-fastened garments cited from the West Frieze are really chlamydes at all. May not they and with them others of similar appearance on the Frieze and elsewhere be examples of a rectangular garment, of which the Greek name was perhaps *χλανίς* or *χλανίσκος*? So far as I can see, there is nothing decisive to be said against this. If this supposition, which I do not urge, be entertained as a possibility, it would follow that in many cases of brooch-fastened garments represented in art it can not be certainly decided whether the name "chlamys" is applicable or not.

¹The only exception which I have discovered is in the folded piece of stuff held by the priest in the East Frieze. In this piece two adjacent edges meeting at a right angle appear to be marked as selvages, where in any actual garment one of the edges would show a hem.